

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
DALLAS DIVISION**

**DEFENDANTS' APPENDIX IN SUPPORT OF
REPLY TO PLAINTIFF'S RESPONSE TO DEFENDANT'S
MOTION TO DISMISS AND BRIEF IN SUPPORT**

Exhibit	Document Title	Page
4	Emefiele Supplemental Aff.	Appx #49-56
5	2014 Settlement Agreement	Appx #57-58
6	Signed Demand	Appx #59-60
7	This Day Report	Appx #61-66

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Zino Magbegor

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Attorney for Defendant

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

On February 10, 2023, I electronically filed the foregoing Appendix in support of Reply to Plaintiff's Response to Defendant's Motion to Dismiss and Brief in Support to be filed with the Clerk of Court, using the CM/ECF system that will send notification of such filing to all counsel of record:

Donald M. Kaiser
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/s/ Zino Magbegor

Zino Magbegor

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
DALLAS DIVISION

JOHN OMOILE)
Plaintiff,)
) Docket No. 22-cv-02638-X
v.)
)
)
)
)
GODWIN EMEFIELE)
Defendant.) December 21, 2022

**AFFIDAVIT OF GODWIN EMEFIELE IN SUPPORT OF
MOTION TO DISMISS THE COMPLAINT**

Godwin Emeifiele declares, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1747, under penalty of perjury that the following is true and correct:

1. I file this affidavit in support of my motion to dismiss the removed complaint in this action.
2. I am over 18 years old
3. I am a citizen of Nigeria
4. I am not a resident of any state in the United States of America nor am I a lawful permanent resident of the United States of America.
5. I reside in Lagos Nigeria, my sole domicile.
6. I have been employed all my life in Nigeria.
7. I was educated in Nigeria where I did all my schooling up to and including University level education.
8. I have never been employed in the United States of America or in Texas.
9. I am not eligible to pay tax in Texas and I have not paid nor do I owe any tax in Texas.

10. I do not possess a Texas driver's license.

11. I am not eligible to register to vote in Texas or any state in the United States of America as I am not a citizen of the United States of America.

12. I do not have any bank account in Texas or anywhere in the United States of America.

13. I have never received any utility bill in my name or on my behalf from any utility company in Texas.

14. I visit several states in the United States of America, including Texas while on my annual vacation/holidays from my work in Nigeria.

15. I also visit other countries during my annual vacation/holidays including, Dubai in the UAE, London, England and the Cayman Islands.

16. On occasion of my annual vacation/holidays, I visited and stayed with family in Texas, including the Plaintiff, Mr. Omoile.

17. In around 2008, Plaintiff, Mr. Omoile purchased a property at 967 Hummingbird Road, Coppell, Texas the same neighborhood which Plaintiff resided.

18. In around, 2015, Plaintiff relinquished the title to this property to his sister, Mrs. Margaret Emefiele. Mrs. Emefiele subsequently sold the 967 Hummingbird property and purchased a replacement property at 179 Georgian Drive, Coppell, Texas.

19. Over the course of several years in assisting Mr. Omoile, he and I had a meeting in Nigeria on October 20, 2012, and agreed to "severe all business and personal ties."

20. One year and four months after and, after numerous discussions and negotiations mediated by various third-party mediators, Mr. Omoile and I signed a settlement agreement on 26/04/2014 in Nigeria.

21. The 2014 settlement agreement resolved all issues concerning the Zenith Bank shares.

22. The 2014 settlement agreement also resolved the oil and gas business matters between us.

23. I performed my obligations in whole as required by the 2014 Settlement Agreement.

24. My first obligation in the 2014 Settlement Agreement is that I pay off all outstanding mortgage balance, taxes to the date of April 26, 2014, and other fee remaining to be paid on the two properties in Houston, Texas.

25. Per the 2014 settlement agreement, on 04/28/2014, I paid \$100,000 into Mr. Omoile's bank account with Zenith Bank, Lagos, Nigeria. I also paid \$20,000 into this same bank account on 05/08/2014. And, again on 05/13/2014, I paid another \$30,000 into this same Omoile's bank account with Zenith Bank, Lagos, Nigeria.

26. The \$150,000 was for the payment of the balance of the Wachovia Bank loan that Mr. Omoile took out for the two properties in Houston, even though Mr. Omoile took \$240,000 from me to invest in the two Houston properties.

27. Mr. Omoile withdrew the \$150,000 from his Zenith Bank account in Lagos and he traveled with this large sum of money and brought it through the U. S. Airport.

28. I suspect that Mr. Omoile did not declare the \$150,000 to the U.S. customs. I also suspect that Mr. Omoile did not pay any tax on the \$150,000 he collected in Lagos, Nigeria.

29. Till today, Mr. Omoile has not accounted for the \$205,000 out of the \$240,000 he solicited from me to invest in the two Houston properties. Mr. Omoile used the \$205,000 for other personal purposes unrelated to the development of the two Houston properties. Mr. Omoile

made false statement to me that he would use the \$205,000 to develop the two Houston properties but instead he diverted my \$205,000 for his own personal purpose.

30. Mr. Omoile came to Nigeria in 2004 to open his brokerage account at Zenith Securities Ltd, a Nigerian brokerage company in Lagos Nigeria so he could participate in the initial public offering of Zenith Bank, PLC, where I was in senior management position at the time.

31. Mr. Omoile had a broker, Mr. Agbo Ben Andrew at Zenith Bank Securities, Ltd who Mr. Omoile sent emails instructing the broker to buy and sell shares.

32. On August 19, 2010, Mr. Omoile who was visiting Nigeria at the time, went in-person to Mr. Andrew's office in Lagos, Nigeria to request the account history of the Zenith Bank shares he held in his brokerage account.

33. On August 23, 2010, Mr. Omoile had email exchanges with Mr. Andrew who provided the account history to Mr. Omoile. Mr. Omoile has been unsatisfied with the account history his broker provided to him.

34. Mr. Omoile had closed his brokerage account at Zenith Bank Securities Ltd before the time of his signed Demand Letter on December 13, 2012.

35. When Mr. Omoile closed his brokerage account at Zenith Bank Securities Ltd he instructed his broker to pay the all the funds in the brokerage account into his bank account that he had opened the Zenith Bank branch in Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. His broker complied.

36. Mr. Omoile took all funds from the brokerage account at Zenith Bank Securities Ltd although he had not paid for all of the Zenith Bank shares he liquidated in the brokerage account.

37. My second obligation in the 2014 Settlement Agreement is to assist Mr. Omoile get a clear record from Zenith Securities Ltd, a Nigerian brokerage company in Lagos Nigeria where Mr. Omoile opened his brokerage account.

38. In 2018 when Mr. Omoile came to Nigeria I assisted him with getting a clear record from Zenith Securities Ltd. Yet, Mr. Omoile insists that I should provide the brokerage account record myself even though I am not a broker nor the broker/dealer. Zenith Securities Ltd is the broker/dealer.

39. Before Mr. Omoile visited Lagos, Nigeria in 2018, Mr. Omoile sought to open the 2014 Settlement Agreement by representing that additional property tax is owed on the Houston properties. Mr. Omoile's represented that he owed \$200,000 in property tax for the two Houston properties.

40. In 2018, Mr. Omoile came to Nigeria and he visited me at my residence in Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria to collect the \$200,000 so he could pay the property tax on the two Houston properties.

41. When I asked Mr. Omoile for proof of the tax debt on these Houston properties, Mr. Omoile promised to provide the proof of the tax debt on these two properties after the property tax is paid when he returned to Texas.

42. To this day, Mr. Omoile has not provided any documents of the property tax owed or proof that he paid the property tax for which he collected \$200,000 in Lagos, Nigeria. Mr. Omoile made false representations to me which I relied on in order for him to obtain the \$200,000 from me.

43. Mr. Omoile has continued to this day to not provide proof of the property tax debt for which he collected \$200,000 from me in Lagos, Nigeria. settlement agreement.

44. Mr. Omoile has held onto my \$200,000 to this day and he has not explained to me how

he spent the \$200,000.

45. Mr. Omoile also traveled with and brought this \$200,000 in cash through the U. S. Airport and I suspect Mr. Omoile did not declare the \$200,000 to the U.S. customs. I also suspect that Mr. Omoile did not pay any tax on the \$200,000 he received from me as part of the settlement of his claims.

46. I became a public officer in June 2014, after the settlement in April 2014. As a public officer I became a public official who Mr. Omoile and his agents began to harass and embarrass if I did not pay the money demanded for claims that were settled and for which Mr. Omoile was paid in full.

47. In 2019, five years after the 2014 settlement agreement, and after he received full payment I was obligated to make as set forth in the 2014 settlement agreement, Mr. Omoile engaged a lawyer in Nigeria to open the 2014 settlement agreement yet again. The Nigerian-based lawyer demanded another \$36 million for the same claims that Mr. Omoile settled on April 26, 2014.

48. In 2021, Mr. Omoile hired a second lawyer to file a lawsuit in federal court in Dallas (3:21-cv-01657-X) demanding unjustifiable payment of \$31.5 million for the same claims that Mr. Omoile settled on April 26, 2014, even though Mr. Omoile had collected full payment under the 2014 settlement agreement.

49. Mr. Omoile dismissed the lawsuit he filed in federal court in Dallas. See docket number, 3:21-cv-01657-X.

50. Mr. Omoile then hired his current counsel who then filed a state court action and who

made third demand for payment for the same claims Mr. Omoile settled on April 26, 2014. This demand for additional or more payment is unjustified and extortionate and attempt to harass and extort money from me because of my position as a public officer.

51. The 2014 settlement agreement is binding on Mr. Omoile and me. And, I have performed all of my obligations in whole.

52. In addition, under the 2014 Settlement Agreement, I agreed to relinquish my interests in the Houston properties to Mr. Omoile as well as the truck heads that were in Mr. Omoile's possession. I did so.

53. According to the land records in Houston, Mr. Omoile kept all the proceeds when he sold 7026 W 43rd Street, Houston property for \$237,500.

54. Also according to the land records in Houston, Mr. Omoile also kept all the proceeds from the sale of the 7028 W. 43rd Street, Houston property for \$112,000.

55. Mr. Omole also kept all of the proceeds from the sale of the truck heads with values exceeding \$40,000.

56. The state action Mr. Omoile's current counsel filed was removed to the federal court in Dallas and is the subject of a motion to dismiss.

I hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

By: Godwin Emefiele
Godwin Emefiele

Subscribed and sworn to before me this on this 21st day of December 2022.

Nitor V. Egbarin
Nitor V. Egbarin, Esq.
Commissioner of Superior Court

Client, Emefiele, Godwin, Omoile v. Emefiele, Motion to Dismiss, Affidavit of Godwin Emefiele, Final, 2022-12-21

Final Audit Report

2022-12-22

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Adobe Acrobat Sign

Def Appx 56

**Memorandum of Understanding and Settlement Agreement Between
Mr. John Omoile and Mr. Godwin Emeifie**

Preamble

Mr. John Omoile and Mr. Godwin Emeifie have been friends with family ties for decades. In the last few years, Mr. Omoile and Mr. Emeifie attempted to extend their hitherto congenial relationship to include a few business endeavors. The business relationship was not successful; rather it strained their friendship overtime. This settlement agreement and memorandum of understanding terminates the business relationship permanently, and is intended to restore their once friendly relationship.

Real Estate Investment In Houston, TX: Their joint business included the purchase of two properties located at 7026 W. 43rd Street and 7028 W. 43rd Street, Houston, TX. Both purchases were made between 2006 and 2009, and involved contractual arrangement with developer Massaad Group and contractor Byblos Builder. It is agreed that Mr. Godwin Emeifie will pay off all outstanding mortgage balance, taxes to date and any other fee remaining to be paid on these properties. Furthermore, by this agreement Mr. Emeifie agrees to relinquish his right to the properties and if necessary execute a Quit Claim Deed (QCD) on the properties. This means that by this agreement the properties are assigned to Mr. John Omoile free and clear of any outstanding payments to date. This agreement recognizes that if Mr. Emeifie's name does not exist in any of the real estate documents, the QCD may not be necessary.

Coppell Property: Both parties were engaged in buying a property located at 967 Hummingbird Drive Coppell, TX. Funds for this property were provided by Mr. Emeifie even though Mr. Omoile helped Mr. Emeifie to buy the property for his personal use so that during visits to the United States, he and his family can stay in their own private home. Both parties agree that this property which was fully financed by Mr. Emeifie belongs to him and was never a part of the business activities that both parties attempted to carry out. Since this property was never a part of the business and belongs to Mr. Emeifie, Mr. Omoile agrees to hand over every document in his possession concerning this property if he has not done so already, and further agrees to relinquish any right to this property.

Zenith Bank Shares: Mr. John Omoile hereby agrees to contact Zenith Securities Ltd. to obtain actual records of Zenith Bank shares which he either purchased for himself, purchased for others, or otherwise were assigned to him. Mr. Emeifie agrees to assist him in getting a clear record from Zenith Securities, if and when necessary. It is hereby acknowledged that these shares belong to Mr. Omoile alone or to Mr. Omoile and his associates.

Truck Heads: Both parties attempted to run a trucking business. The Truck Heads were purchased with funds from Mr. Emeifie. They remain in the US as they were never shipped to Nigeria for the intended trucking business. It is hereby agreed that Mr. Omoile should keep the Truck Heads or dispose of them and retain for himself any sales proceeds therefrom.

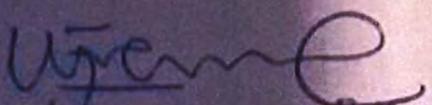
Zenith Bank Binder Supply Contract: Sometime between 2010 and 2012, i.e., within the tenure of Mr. Emeifie as CEO/Managing Director of Zenith Bank, the bank awarded Mr. Omoile a contract to supply 8,500 folders at the price of N6,400 per folder. Since full execution of this settlement agreement is intended to bring full closure to the business relationship between both parties, it is agreed that the contract between Mr. John Omoile and Zenith Bank plc will be terminated within two weeks of signing this agreement. It is further agreed that if there is any remaining amount due to Mr. Omoile from the contract, he will be paid in full within the same two week time frame and in accordance with the terms of the contract.

Oil and Gas Business:

Both parties attempted to operate an Oil and Gas business. The business did not truly materialize due to several problems. Since this agreement terminates every business relationship, both parties hereby agree to terminate the oil and gas business as well and hold each other totally harmless.

Complete Agreement:

The foregoing represents the full settlement agreement and memorandum of understanding. By signing below, both Mr. Godwin Emeifie and Mr. John Omoile agree that there are no remaining issues to be resolved between both of them. Furthermore, they commit themselves to rebuilding their hitherto cordial relationship difficult as it may be to do so.

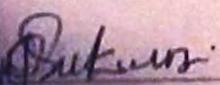

Signed: Mr. Godwin Emeifie

Date 4/26/14


Signed: Mr. John Omoile

Date

4/26/14

Witness for both signatures: 
Mrs. Esther Ojukwu and Mrs. Mary Anegbode

Date 26/04/2014

Dear Godwin,

Per our meeting in Nigeria on 10/20/2012, wherein we agreed to sever all business and personal ties. To do so, I am offering that outstanding projects be resolved by me forfeiting any and all interests I have or may have in the ventures and/or assets. In a previous email, I outlined our projects, which include real estate in Houston, Texas, rosewood Malcolm llc, an oil and gas company-Noka Oil and Gas , commercial vehicles-two oil tankers, stocks in Zenith Bank,First bank, Oceanic bank and Dangote flour. and the contract to supply Zenith Bank 5,000 BALANCE customized folders and ; real estate in Coppell, Texas.

Thus, in return for my giving up all my all interests, I am demanding the following specific and firm considerations:

a. LOST WAGES:

Between 2004 and 2011, I devoted most of my time and energy developing the businesses we set up. I made numerous trips to Houston from Dallas on account of the properties there and purchasing and shipping Noka Oil and Gas commercial vehicles to you. Further, I took numerous trips to Jamaica with reference to the farm we have in Agbior- Emotan farms. These responsibilities took my focus away from my responsibilities to my company, Jessnic Home Health Agency, Inc. which caused me to suffer loss of income.

From 2004 to 2007, I lost \$250,000.00 per year for a sub-total of \$1M.

From 2007 to 2011, I lost \$750,00 per year for a sub-total of \$3,750,000.00

b. ANTICIPATED FUTURE REVENUE:

If you had fulfilled your responsibilities under our agreement, instead of diverting your efforts and resources to form Dummies Oil and Gas company in Nigeria using your "wife", our projects would have taken off and been making money. However, due to your breach of our contract I have lost prospective income to the amount of \$10,000,000.00. I am hereby demanding this amount as pay-off.

c. STOCK VALUE:

I am hereby demanding the dividend value of the stocks you gave me in Zenith Bank. Per our agreement, the dividend should be based on 468750 shares.

238,316 SHARES OF OUTSTANDING ZENITH SHARES -the spread sheets I sent you last month
7,820 OUTSTANDING ONYEKA OMOILE ZENITH SHARES

3110 OUTSTANDING NICOLETTE OMOILE DANGOTE FLOUR SHARES

3110 OUTSTANDING ONYEKA OMOILE DANGOTE FLOUR SHARES

18456 OUTSTANDING CATHERINE OMOILE FIRST BANK SHARES

18456 OUTSTANDING NICOLETTE OMOILE FIRST BANK SHARES

50,000 OUTSTANDING CATHERINE OMOILE OCEANIC BANK SHARES

d. I am demanding that the contract awarded to me to supply Zenith Bank customized folders be fulfilled. At the present time, I have received partial payment for 2,500 folders which the

bank received on 7/25/2012 BALANCE (1,250.000 naira). 2,500 folders recently delivered on 11/1/2012 BALANCE (2.5 million naira).

e. Thus, I am demanding the balance owed for the 2500 folders delivered in the amount of 1.2 million Naira, on 07/25/2012 and 2.5 million naira payment for the 2,500 folders delivered on 11/1/2012 TOTALLING (3.7 MILLION naira) and APPROVAL for the final 5000 folders TO FULLFIL MY COMMITMENTS to my suppliers .

I agree that upon your fulfilling the demands made above, I will sign over my rights to all business projects and assets to you including the Coppell property as soon as I receive the documents from you.

In conclusion, I am claiming the following:

1. \$1,000,000.00 (2004 to 2007)
2. \$3,750,000.00 (2007 to 2011)
3. \$10,000,000.00 (future revenue)
4. 4,000,000 Naira (remaining share value of zenith shares and balance dividend payment)
5. 2,000,000 NAIRA (oceanic bank, first bank and dangote outstanding shares and dividend payments due on all shares)
6. 1.2 million Naira (amount owed for 2,500 delivered folders delivered on 07/25/2012)
7. 2.5 million Naira (amount owed for 2,500 delivered folders delivered on 11/1/2012)
8. 37 million Naira (amount for 5,000 folders completed production)
9. HOUSTON PROPERTIES- PAY-OFF BALANCE \$157,143.55 BY 12-31-2012

I hope we can resolve this matter swiftly and amicably. Do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions through Uncle Vincent Ebuh.

Yours sincerely,


John Omoile
12/13/12

Buhari Pours Cold Water on Emefiele's Traducers, Welcomes CBN Gov Back from Leave

• *Says no nation can develop without peace*

Deji Elumoye in Abuja

President Muhammadu Buhari personally welcomed Governor of

the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Mr. Godwin Emefiele, from his annual leave during a function at the State House, Abuja, yesterday.

ending speculations about a tense relationship between them. The rumours followed attempts by the Department of State Services (DSS)

to arrest the CBN governor on charges of terrorism financing, which many saw as a ploy to oust him.

The president's warm welcome of Emefiele might have put paid to all the surreptitious moves.

Buhari spoke while receiving

in audience Director General of the Arab Bank for Economic

Continued on page 5

Where Are the 400 Bureau De Change Terror Financiers, HURIWA Asks Malami... Page 11

THIS DAY

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Explosion Rocks APC Campaign in Rivers... Page 42

At Ibadan Rally, Atiku Declares Restructuring 'Will Be One of the Pillars of My Govt'

• PDP: we're determined to win South-west • There'll be no more APC after election, Ayu vows • Ortom boasts PDP will win Benue

George Okoh in Makurdi, Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja, and Kemi Olaitan in Ibadan

The presidential candidate of

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, has said if he wins the February 25 presidential election, restructuring, a core desire of people of the South-west, would

be a cardinal principle of his administration.

Atiku spoke in Ibadan while addressing a crowd of party members and supporters at

the frontage of Mapo Hall. He pledged to introduce reforms towards enhancing the status of the traditional institution in the country.

PDP also expressed its determination to win the South-west in the forthcoming elections, while the party's national chairman, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, urged aggrieved

members to return to the party. Ayu said PDP would win the elections and its victory would

Continued on page 5

Tinubu: If Elected, We'll Eliminate Corruption

• Says his govt will support establishment of construction bank

Adedayo Akinwale in Abuja

Presidential candidate of All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Tinubu, yesterday, said he would tackle head-on the problem of corruption, if elected president at next month's poll. Tinubu stated this in Abuja during a consultative forum with the Federation of Construction Industry in Nigeria (FOCI).

The APC candidate also said his government would back the establishment of a construction bank.

While aiming to eliminate corruption from the Nigerian system, he assured that the government would make conscious efforts to adopt strategies that would attract, rather than scare away, investors.

Tinubu told the forum, "We don't want to scare away investors of today and tomorrow, but we promise you, we will eliminate corruption. Part of it is that we look at ourselves, too. Not just enforcement but to reduce the propensity for corruption."

The former governor of Lagos State stressed the need for a



'GOVERNOR, YOU'RE WELCOME BACK'...

L-R: President Muhammadu Buhari; his Chief of Staff, Prof. Ibrahim Gambari; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama; Borno State Governor, Prof. Babagana Zulum and CBN Governor, Mr. Godwin Emefiele, during an audience with the Arab Bank for Economic Development at the State House Abuja...yesterday

SUNDAY AGHAZE

Continued on page 5

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PAGE FIVE

FG Begins Restructuring of MOFI as Buhari Approves Board Members, Mgt Team

● **Shamsudeen Usman chairs new board**

Ndubuisi Francis in Abuja

About three months after the federal government disclosed plan to restructure the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI), its investment vehicle, President Muhammadu Buhari, has approved the appointment of members of the board and the executive management team of the new MOFI, in order to commence the execution of its mandate.

The Minister of Finance, Budget

and National Planning, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed had last October disclosed that MOFI would be restructured as part of overall measures to revive over N30 trillion non-performing assets and boost government revenue.

To achieve this, the federal government seeks to fully set up MOFI as a world-class investment company with a new management and board to move from the civil service structure where it sits, as a unit under the Office of

the Accountant General of the Federation, with core professionals with specialisation in portfolio management.

In line with the goal of restructuring the investment vehicle, Buhari, yesterday approved the appointment of members of the board and the executive management team of the new MOFI.

A statement issued by the Special Adviser, Media and Communications to the Minister

of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Yunusa Tanko Abdullahi said the board of directors of MOFI was to provide strategic direction and oversight while the executive management team is to drive effective day-to-day operations of the business and will be supported by the middle management team.

He said: "The constituted part-time board members are: Dr. Shamsudeen Usman, Chairman.

"The non-executive directors are Permanent Secretaries, Finance and

Petroleum, Accountant-General of the Federation, and representative of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). Others are Mr. Olawale Edun, Hajiya Fatima Mede, Ike Chioke, Muhammad Nda; and Barrister Alheri Bulus Nyako.

"Mr. President also approved Executive Management including Dr. Armstrong Katang as CEO, Eric Ojo, Executive Director, Portfolio, Sani Yakubu, Executive Director, Investment, and Oluwafemi Owonubi, Executive Director, Risk."

The statement added that, "all the above persons were identified with key competencies to drive the achievement of MOFI's governance and management objectives."

The Governing Council of MOFI is to be inaugurated by Buhari on a later date.

Pursuant to Sections 2 and 3 of the MOFI Act 1959, MOFI is a corporation solely vested with the responsibility to manage all federal government investments, interests, estates, easements and rights.

AT IBADAN RALLY, ATIKU DECLARIES RESTRUCTURING 'WILL BE ONE OF THE PILLARS OF MY GOVT'

mark the end of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in the country.

In a related development, Benue State Governor Samuel Ortom, at a rally in Oju and Obi local government areas of the state, yesterday, assured supporters of PDP that the party would be victorious in the 2023 elections.

Meanwhile, Governor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State, a member of the G-5 Governors who are upset by the national leadership of the party, was absent at the rally. He was, however, acknowledged by everyone, who spoke, including Atiku.

Although THISDAY gathered that a former governor of the state, Senator Rasheed Ladoja, had brokered peace between Atiku and Makinde during a meeting at his Ondo Street residence in Bodija, Ibadan, Wednesday night.

Atiku, who also visited the Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Lekan Balogun, lamented that the people of the South-west had been deceived by the APC administration on restructuring and other promises. He assured them that his administration would implement restructuring if he got to power in May.

He disclosed that the type of restructuring he would introduce would give more powers to states and local government areas, insisting that restructuring of the country would be one of the cardinal agenda of his administration.

Atiku stated, "I will restructure

Nigeria. Restructuring of the country will be achieved during my time. By restructuring, we mean giving more powers and autonomy to the states and local government areas.

"It will be one of the pillars of my government."

He said, "They have failed to implement it. Vote them out," apparently, referring to APC, and urging the electorate to, "Vote them out completely. From top to bottom, vote for PDP; from bottom to top, vote for PDP. We thank you very much. Vote for PDP so that together, we can match to progress."

The former vice president said PDP was committed to making sure that there would be no more strikes in the universities, adding that, if elected, he would fund the universities, and pay the teachers on time so that there won't be any disruptions in the academic activities.

According to him, "We also commit to making sure that we control and always take control of your security situation, so that there is law and order in every part of this country. These are our commitments. It is not like the commitments of the APC in the last seven to eight years, everything they have committed, they have failed to implement."

"Therefore, if you are living witnesses, this is an opportunity for you to vote out APC. Therefore, I want to appeal to you, the people of Oyo State, to support the PDP all the way, from top to bottom, and together, we can march into

victory and progress for our great country."

At the palace of Olubadan, Atiku said his administration would introduce reforms that would allow traditional rulers perform their role as expected.

Bemoaning the current state of insecurity in Nigeria, Atiku stated that traditional rulers had a role to play to maintain peace and security in their domains. He said the reforms he craved, when introduced, would place traditional rulers in a position to ensure peace and security in their areas.

Atiku told the paramount ruler, "Let me assure you that the PDP government will bring some reforms to enhance the position of traditional rulers, to ensure that the traditional institution plays its role in ensuring security in the country. I remember that during the colonial regime, the traditional rulers played significant roles in ensuring security in their domains.

The PDP will introduce the reforms to ensure that the traditional institution takes its rightful place. The government will dialogue with the people of various sections and areas in the country. These are the things we plan to introduce when we come to power."

Director General of the Presidential Campaign Organisation of PDP and Governor of Sokoto State, Aminu Tambuwal, also commended Makinde for allowing the democratic spirit to play out by allowing every member of the party to participate in the campaign.

Tambuwal said, "You must have noticed the train in the South-west, we in the PDP in the South-west are in a very strong competition in the South-west and by the grace of God, we are determined to win the South-west before any other zone."

"I commend Governor Seyi Makinde, the party chairman, for speaking to you to come out en masse to vote for the PDP from top to bottom. That is the only way we can complement each other to salvage Nigeria, unite Nigeria, rescue Nigeria and, indeed, to make Nigeria great again."

Ayu, in his speech, commended party members for coming out in large number for the rally. He described Makinde as a true party man, who had the interest of the party at heart.

While noting that the National Working Committee (NWC) of the party had been able to return the party to the people, the national chairman appealed to those aggrieved to return to the fold.

According to him, "Eight years ago, some people came with lies, with propaganda and deceived you, that they are going to give you a change. They brought something called change. Everyone of you here is indebted, because every day they are borrowing."

"As a party in government, we made life better for every Nigerian. We were working on it until you were deceived."

"After the election, there will be no APC in Nigeria. They will disappear from the surface of the Nigeria air and back to the small parties that they were."

"I'm calling on our aggrieved members to come back home, because we are going to win. We shall win at every level, PDP will sweep this country, all our state Houses of Assembly, our National Assembly members, our governors, and, of course, we are going back to the villa."

"Nigerians will know that PDP is back. We are not just back, we are back to work for you, to make sure that we improve your roads, we improve education, because the other party didn't even care when our children were at home for one year."

"That is not a government; that is irresponsibility. PDP will make sure that schools are open, roads

are good, food is cheaper, fuel is better and that is what you are fighting for. You are not standing in the sun for nothing. You are standing in the sun because you want the quality of your life to improve and we shall improve it all across Nigeria."

The Olubadan waded into the crisis rocking PDP, asking Atiku and other leaders to do everything possible to ensure reconciliation with Makinde.

Speaking through the Otun Balogun of Ibadanland, High Chief Tajudeen Ajibola, he urged the PDP presidential candidate and other elders of the party to bring about genuine reconciliation between him and all the aggrieved members of the party before the election. He said there was nothing like unity of purpose in an exercise of this nature.

The monarch also charged the PDP standard bearer to see security as a serious issue to tackle if he became the country's number one citizen after the presidential election.

"Ibadan people want from your presidency the creation of Ibadan State and at our level as traditional rulers, we want your government to put us in mind so as to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of the country," the monarch stated.

Other speakers, who commended Makinde for his developmental strides and for ensuring that the rally held, included Atiku's wife, Mrs. Titi Abubakar; Governor Udom Emmanuel of Akwa Ibom State; Jumoke Akinjide; and Senator Dino Melaye.

Speaking at the rally in Benue, Ortom, who said the party structure would galvanise it to victory, noted that all the 276 councillors in the state were members of PDP, while 26 out of 30 members of the state assembly were also members of PDP.

"We also have seven House of Representatives members out of 11 and all the three senators from Benue are members of PDP. Also, the deputy governor and the governor are members of PDP. This goes to show that Benue is purely a PDP state and this, we will maintain," Ortom said.

He advised the people to arm themselves with their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs), emphasising

that the forthcoming elections were different from the past ones.

According to him, "The era of snatching ballot boxes is over. Now is the era of Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BIVAS). With the introduction of BIVAS, you must be there at the polling unit to vote because the machine must capture you before you will vote. You should take this election very seriously."

In his remarks, the governorship candidate of PDP, Mr Titus Uba, said he would consolidate on Ortom's outstanding legacies if voted in, adding that the governor has built a solid foundation for security and they would leverage on it.

Uba, who asked the people to entrust him and his deputy, Mr John Ngbede, with their mandate, promised that they would never be disappointed if they gave them their votes.

"We are blessed with arable land in the state, as such, we will use agriculture to develop the state through modern agricultural techniques," Uba said.

Ngbede, too, said they would build on what Ortom had done, and pledged that they would not leave the civil servants out in their programmes.

At the same time, the acting chairman of PDP in the state, Mr Isaac Mffo, told the people that a vote for the party meant securing the future of their children.

Some of the PDP chieftains, who were in Atiku's entourage to the state, included the party's vice presidential candidate, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa; Ayu; his predecessor, Uche Secondus; Governor Aminu Tambuwal of Sokoto State; and his counterparts from Bala and Osun, Douye Diri and Ademola Adeleke, respectively; former governors of Kogi and Osun states, Idris Wada and Olagunsoye Oyinlola, respectively; as well as Mrs. Titi Abubakar.

Others were Senator Dino Melaye; former Vice President Nnamadi Sambo; former governor of Jigawa State, Sule Lamido; Hon. Ndidi Elumelu; Senator Abdul Ningi; former governor of Adamawa State, Boni Haruna; former governor of Cross River State, Lyle Imoke; former Speaker, House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara; and Senator Philip Aduda.

TINUBU: IF ELECTED, WE'LL ELIMINATE CORRUPTION

construction bank, which could guarantee long term loans for players in the industry.

He said, "On the question of construction bank, we will look at that. You are the people, who will subscribe to its ownership. We can only support it as a government in terms of its policy."

"What is the problem with long term funding instrument? Is it because of the reserves that is lacking that we don't have a bond instrument that will be of 30 years tenure."

"If you have a bond that will be of 30 years tenure, you already have a bank, but if you get that integrated in the system, anybody in the construction industry will

recognise the need for us to have that long term money."

"And why is the market not trading on that long term instrument?"

"Get that assurance from me because I know how, I'm not Mr. Sell it all. The symbol of my party is broom. Sweep it clean, bring about the good of the society."

The APC presidential candidate lamented what he described as the static nature of the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN), stressing that the bank lacks dynamic innovation to even create a secondary market in the housing industry.

According to him, "Changing the bottlenecks in the area of construction, tender processes, transparency. I know you have

noticed so much change since Fashola took over, we did some of these things together, when he was the Chief of Staff of Lagos and I was governor."

He reiterated his determination to ensure security of life and property, saying, "What we must look at are numerous, but our destination is a prosperous, better Nigeria, not for me as an individual, but for our children and their children. If we fail to invest in the future of those children and we take ours away to foreign countries for better education, neglecting the children of the poor, the result is what we are seeing today in the form of insecurity. They become a threat to your own investment."

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BUHARI POURS COLD WATER ON EMEFIELE'S TRADUCERS, WELCOMES CBN GOV BACK FROM LEAVE

Development, Dr. Sid Ould Tah. Emeifiele and Borno State Governor, Professor Babagana Zulum, had accompanied Tah on the visit to the president.

During the meeting, the president acknowledged the presence of Emeifiele, saying, "The Governor of Central Bank, you are welcome. I am pleased you were well received."

Buhari's remarks elicited laughter from others present.

It was the first time the CBN governor was publicly meeting the president since his return from leave and also their first public meeting since the attempt by the DSS to obtain a court order to arrest Emeifiele.

The apex bank's governor had on Monday resumed office after his annual leave. But while he was away, in December, the secret service agency approached an Abuja court to try to obtain an order to arrest Emeifiele over charges bordering on terrorism financing. Many believed the charges were trumped up.

However, the Federal High Court sitting in Abuja stopped the DSS from arresting the CBN governor.

After the meeting, Buhari, while bidding his guest goodbye, again turned to shake Emeifiele's hand, saying, "Governor, you are welcome back."

Speaking earlier during the meeting, Buhari stressed that no nation could develop without peace

and tranquility. He said peace and development complemented each other.

According to statement issued by his media adviser, Femi Adesina, Buhari observed that the issues that affected one nation also affected others.

He stated, "This has been clearly demonstrated in our fight against the tyranny of terrorists that have spread across the entire West African sub-region, and beginning to emerge in our sister countries in some parts of East and Central Africa."

The president, who on Tuesday in Nouakchott, Mauritania, received an award for Strengthening of the Peace in Africa from the Abu Dhabi Peace Forum, said the work of the Arab Bank for Economic Development "is very critical and, indeed, a major catalyst and tool for achieving our overall objective as leaders on the continent."

Lauding the bank for its investment in Nigeria, the president pointed out its strides in the agricultural sector regarding food security systems, capacity building, and integrated infrastructure project.

He said the key focus of his administration had been security, economy and anti-corruption, noting that the three are critical "towards achieving our overall development objective, not just as a country, but more importantly as a continent."

Noting that focus on agriculture and infrastructure allowed Nigeria

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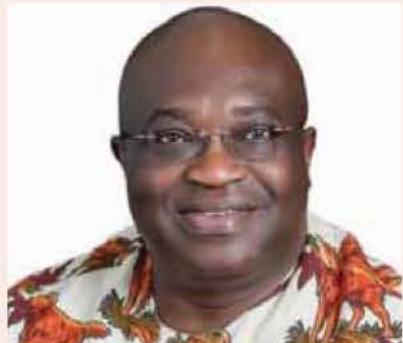
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The continuing harassment of the central bank governor questions the integrity of the secret police, writes BOLAJI ADEBIYI



A CHANGE OF STATUS

Okezie Ikpeazu will represent Abia South Senatorial District better, reckons MICHAEL NWABUEZE



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ELECTIONS, THEN WHAT?

JOSHUA J. OMOJUWA urges the electorate to consistently put governments on their toes



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TACKLING THE RISING RAPE CASES



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THE TRAVALS OF GODWIN EMEFIELE

By the time the week ends tomorrow, it would have been an interesting one that began with the dramatic return of Godwin Emeefiele, the embattled governor of Central Bank of Nigeria, and was spiced by the dust raised by the All Progressives Congress presidential campaign over a confession of a former aide of Atiku Abubakar, the Peoples Democratic Party's presidential candidate, alleging corrupt practices against the main opposition party's torchbearer.

For weeks after the legal misadventure of the Department of State Service to have Emeefiele put in the cooler, no one could say with certainty the central banker's whereabouts safe that he was said to be abroad on medical leave. As the curiosity of the weary public grew over the striking coincidence between the failed legal ambush and his medical vacation, speculations became rife that security agencies were waiting for him to be apprehended once he steps his foot on Nigerian soil.

But knowing that he could not stay away from his sensitive office indefinitely without attracting the accusation of abandoning his official duty, particularly as the year's maiden meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee was due, Emeefiele made a deft legal move to guarantee a safe passage back home. The incorporated trustees of Forum for Accountability and Good Leadership, a non-government organisation had approached the court of Justice A.A. Hassan of the Federal Capital Territory High Court, for an ex parte order to stop the DSS and the Inspector-General of Police from arresting the central bank governor.

Again, like the earlier order of Justice John Tsoho of the Federal High Court, Abuja that fenced the DSS from incarcerating Emeefiele, it is curious that although Justice Hassan's order was made on 19 December, it did not become public until eleven days after. But despite the order, speculations remained rife that the security agencies were waiting in the wings to take in the embattled banker from the airport. His arrival, therefore, was bound to generate some drama. Would the DSS or police defy the orders of the court forbidding his arrest?

That question was answered on Monday as Osita Nwanisobi, the bank's director of communications, in a statement confirmed that Emeefiele had resumed duty. How? Media reports had been agog that security agents were milling around the airport to pick



him up. But it would later be reported that the central banker beat the arrest net with the aid of a service chief who deployed soldiers to help him evade the security cordon. Interesting. Next, Peter Afunaya, the spokesman of the nation's secret service denied any attempt to take in Emeefiele.

Meanwhile, the news wave would become inundated with reports of a police siege on Emeefiele's residence on Tuesday night. Although both Olumuyiwa Adejobi, force public relations officer; and Josephine Adeh, FCT command public relations officer, denied knowledge of the action, there were reports that the policemen at the central banker's Abuja residence might have been there to compel him to answer a court summons scheduled for Wednesday over a \$53million dollar suit. Another strange occurrence. Why would policemen, without the knowledge of the police hierarchy compel the appearance of a party to an essentially civil suit?

The entire Emeefiele saga oozes a rotten smell, and without a doubt, a national embarrassment. That the governor of the central bank is accused of terrorism financing and economic sabotage, and several months after this weighty allegation, nothing concrete has happened to prove this accusation is not only unfortunate but extremely disgraceful. It questions not only the integrity of the nation's secret service but also its capacity to secure the people it is instituted to protect.

When Justice Tsoho dismissed the ex parte request of the DSS many weeks ago, he said if the secret service was sure of its claims, it should step forward with the evidence. Several weeks after the judicial challenge, the DSS has been

groping in the dark, perhaps in search of non-existent evidence to nail a man they had sought to incarcerate for crimes against national security.

For years, the courts have told security and law enforcement agencies that the law is that investigation precedes arrest and prosecution. This constant recourse to putting the cart before the horse or fishing for evidence after an arrest is regrettable and ought to stop forthwith not because it involves a big man but because it is a common occurrence nationwide particularly as it affects the less privileged citizens.

In the meantime, President Muhammadu Buhari ought to end his aloofness on this embarrassing episode of his central banker being accused of the most heinous crime that has plagued the country in the last seven and a half years. The subtext of the ongoing show of shame is said to be the desire of some power centres at the highest level of government to see the back of Emeefiele and replace him with a more pliant person that would do their bidding in the dying days of the outgoing administration and beyond. This would be a political move that would require more rigorous thinking to pull through given the stringent constitutional requirements for the removal of a central bank governor.

Pending when these power holders would come up with the appropriate strategy to achieve their essential political objective it is important that the central bank governor is allowed the peace of mind to pursue his task. Presently, he has on his hands a currency change policy that is being widely resisted, to implement. It threatens to be a difficult task as even the banks appear to be resisting the policy which is aimed at mopping excess cash in circulation as one of the strategies for taming inflation.

With politicians up in arms against the currency change and cash withdrawal policy close to what looks like the keenest presidential election ever, the central bank governor needs all the focus and concentration he can get to make a success of the new policy. Consequently, the DSS and other security agencies who have evidence of any maleficence against Emeefiele should approach the court with it. Otherwise, they should leave him alone to do his job.

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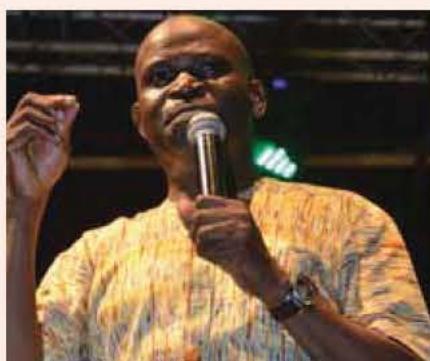
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CONSUL GENERAL WILL STEVENS:
Articulating, Integrating US Policies, Interests in Nigeria

Consul General Will Stevens: Articulating, Integrating US Policies, Interests in Nigeria

Will Stevens is the United States Consul General at the U.S Consulate General in Lagos. As an experienced Foreign Service Officer with overseas experience in South Africa, Russia, Turkmenistan, Israel, and Belarus, as well as experience in Washington at the Foreign Service Institute, the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Bureau of African Affairs, he brings to bear his years of experience to Nigeria in articulating, championing and integrating US policies and interests. In this interview with **Chiemelie Ezeobi**, he discussed the role of US government in the forthcoming 2023 General Elections, the issue of insecurity in Nigeria, engagement with youths and creatives, and contribution to the fight against Gender and Sexual Based Violence, as well as how the US Government needs to position itself to be Nigeria's partner of choice over the next century

For Will Stevens, the United States Consul General, his three-year tour of duty in Nigeria, which began roughly six months ago, was a dream come true.

Initial Perception, Expectations about Nigeria

As at the last count, he has been in Nigeria for the last six months. On what his initial perception about Nigeria was, he said he always wanted to work in Nigeria, especially seeing the success of the Nigerian diaspora in the US.

"I begged for this job. I tried so hard to get it and it's met and exceeded my expectations."

Portfolio in Nigeria

During his three-year tour of duty in Nigeria, his job encompasses overseeing 17 states in Nigeria for the US Government. To do this, he said he works hand in glove with Mary Beth Leonard, the US ambassador, whom he described as an amazing mentor and one of the most experienced ambassadors in the world.

"It's a great opportunity to work with her and under her leadership and working on engagement with Nigeria," he added.

On what his career as a foreign service officer entails, he said they work at USA Embassies and promote US interests, adding that it that can be everything from being an officer in the consulate section to helping American citizens, and issuing visas to people who want to travel to the USA, to working in the political economy section- understanding the political economy context of the country we are working in.

"I spend a lot of time doing public diplomacy, public affairs, exchange programmes and working in the media, articulating US policies to foreign audiences and helping people understand what we are about and why we exist."

But also as Consul General, he works across all the USA agencies and tries to integrate them to achieve their national security objectives which are based on three things; security cooperation, economic growth and development, and governance and democracy.

Priorities in Nigeria as Consul General

For him, his priorities are quite simple but slightly different from those in the North-east due to the peculiarities of the region.

On the above listed priorities he said: "Those are still our priorities here because some of the issues which my colleagues in Abuja and the North-east face, we don't face here. So we have much more business sector based in Lagos, and tech sectors as well as the creative sector."

Youth, Creative Engagements

Beyond the consular work, Stevens also champions engagement with the youth, creatives and even the tech sector.

On this he said: "It's everything from helping to bring in American investors and highlighting the things Americans are doing. We fully support AFRIFF Film festival. We have Netflix, Disney, and Amazon all coming in and debuting American-supported films, Nigerian films or other African films here at the festival."

"That means investment. We are actually looking at it as a Nigerian export. They are producing content for streaming platforms but that's not the only thing."

"We are also working hand in hand with our American centres to support things like the Academy of Women Entrepreneurs where we help young female entrepreneurs figure out how to take their businesses out of the ideation and start their business, get mentored to supporting people like girls in tech, tech women, exchange programmes like the ones you've been on (International Visitors Leadership Programme). We just build connections with the USA."

Contributions to Fight against Gender and Sexual Based Violence

Laudable is the work the consulate is doing in championing the fight against Gender and Sexual Based Violence. During the recently commemorated



Stevens

16 Days of activism against Gender and Sexual Based Violence, the Consul General personally joined a march across Lekki bridge.

"It's something we support greatly," he said, adding that "gender-based Violence is actually an element of our health program. One of the biggest sectors of USA financing in humanitarian assistance comes to Nigeria and it's almost half a billion a year."

"It's about combating HIV/AIDS, some focus on preventing or responding to gender-based violence and that means making sure women and girls are empowered to prevent it or report it when it happens".

However, he said almost all these goes through the local society, and NGOs- "supporting and helping them do the work they do. So you won't see us out there saying look what we are doing, you'll see local organisations doing exactly that".

African Leaders Summit

On the recently held African Leaders Summit, he said it was an opportunity for Nigerians to engage with President Biden; Vice President Harris; Secretary Blinken and a variety of cabinet officials and USA business leaders about the future of the US business.

According to him, it was a chance to highlight President Biden's strategy in Africa, "which is a little bit of a shift in resourcing as it hasn't changed in years but in how we talk about the partnership. We use the term African solution to African problems and what we are talking about is helping to elevate African problems to solutions."

Ultimately, he believes that "USA needs to figure out how we can position ourselves to be Nigeria's partner of choice over the next century".

To achieve this, he aligns with President Biden, who is already working on rebuilding partnerships with African nations including Nigeria to address issues like climate change, food insecurity, the brutal invasion of Ukraine and the violation of some of the basic UN ethos, as well as the decline across the continent and the world.

Controversy over US Security Alert in Nigeria

Last year, in November to be precise, the US government had issued a terror alert for Abuja, advising its citizens to exercise caution, an action that generated controversy. While some argued that the embassy shouldn't have made it public

without recourse to Nigeria's security agencies, others also posited that the alert infringed on Nigeria's sovereignty.

While the Consul General admits that the US Government shares same value of protecting their respective nation's sovereignty, he however believes they owe its citizens the duty of care, especially to share information that will be useful to their well being.

But beyond this, he said each time they have leading information, they not just share with its citizens but also with Nigeria's security agencies, as well as their NGO partners on regular basis. He added that they have a robust partnership with Nigeria on security.

Role of US Government in 2023 Elections

On the role of the US Government in the forthcoming 2023 General Elections, he succinctly stated that they do not support any party, rather, their interest is supporting credible transparent and peaceful elections to reflect the world.

He however charged Nigerians to reject the use of violence and language before, during and after the elections. "When we say all Nigerians, we mean politicians, candidates, students, religious and traditional community leaders, youth, and social organisations.

"Everyone has a role to play because even a small number of troublemakers can cause havoc. So it'll take a comprehensive effort to eliminate the use of violence in the elections."

On other parts of support the US government is channeling for the election, he said though technical assistance and ICT support for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and civil society organisations, they hope to encourage voter participation.

Wielding the Big Stick for Electoral Offenders

When asked what punitive measures they will apply for defaulters, he said "any individual seeking to undermine the democratic process through violence may be found ineligible for visa movements. We've imposed visa restrictions in the past against those responsible for or complacent in undermining the democratic process and we are willing to do so again."

"There are a variety of tools the United States has at its disposal, one of which is visa bans. I don't like to speculate about hypothetical or what happened but we've heard over and over again that the visa ban is a powerful tool for those people that want to go to the United States."

Tackling Corruption

Continuously, the US has proven to one of the places where corrupt politicians and civil servants squirrel off stolen money gotten from Nigeria's commonwealth, especially through purchase of properties.

But Stevens said already, President Biden has made the fight against corruption a core part of their security when he released the first-ever USA strategy on Countering Corruption. This he said emphasises better understanding and taking steps of reducing the ability of these people to use the USA and others to hide assets, and launder the proceeds of corrupt acts.

He said: "We are here in Nigeria with organisations like the EFCC to bring individuals to justice. We offer technical assistance and training, and cooperate with Nigerian officials to find evidence of assets."

"Just last month we announced the return of 35 million dollars that's in addition to those returned over the years. So these assets can be stolen and together through legal proceedings, we can make sure such things are stopped."

Partnership in Tackling Security Threats

Giving the insecurity challenges faced by Nigeria, especially with terrorism, he reiterated that they have built partnership and worked robustly with Nigerian security forces in capacity building and equipment, adding that he is proud of that accomplishment.

Highlighting the fight against Maritime crimes,

he pointed out the work the Nigerian Navy has done with support from the US government.

Speaking on the reduction of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea waters, he said Nigeria went from the most pirated in the world to the least, adding that it's "an incredible testament to the Nigerian military but some of that is due to our partnership, training and technical assistance, providing sensors, radars."

Also touching on the increasing achievements of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), he said their drug enforcement agency works with NDLEA to combat drug trafficking.

"We've seen that some of the recent drug bust in Nigerian history happened in the last six months. That's a testament to our Nigerian partners and we are proud to support them because when you catch the drugs here, you are stopping drugs from going into your communities, and around the world, it's a global fight."

"And the truth is these bad guys aren't just traffickers, they're trafficking wildlife, weapons, people sometimes, drugs and feeding sometimes the violent insurgency. So the more criminals you get off the street, the safer it is."

Tackling Backlog of Visas

One of the herculean task most Nigerians face is securing a US Visa. But the Consul General said they have taken specific concrete steps to reduce the visa wait time.

One of the ways they reduced the visa wait time was to ensure people are now eligible for the interview waiver program. This is for people that have had a visa that's expired in the last four years, and extended for two years that used to be known as a drop box. Now, they don't need to come for an appointment.

With that, he said it has led to almost 60 per cent in wait time. Also, he said they have increased staffing to full levels. This he said made them meet the need of demand for visas and it led to 12 per cent increase last year in the number of students studying in the USA.

He however said they are getting as there's still a lot of digging out to do, adding that the improvement speaks about partnership and relationship.

About Will Stevens

Prior to arriving in Nigeria, Mr. Stevens served as the acting Consul General in Cape Town South Africa, where he directed U.S. government engagement in South Africa's three cape provinces, expanding trade and investment by 50 per cent over two years and overseeing the U.S. government's response to COVID-19 in the Cape.

According to further information on the US government website, in 2014, he received the Edward R. Murrow Award for Excellence in Public Diplomacy, the State Department's highest award for public diplomacy work, for his work leading the U.S. Government's Interagency Task Force on countering Russian propaganda during the Ukraine crisis.

In the Bureau of African Affairs, Mr. Stevens was a Senior Advisor on countering violent extremism and also served as the Bureau Spokesperson, where he directed the public affairs planning and messaging for the 2014 U.S.-Africa Heads of State Summit, which brought together 50 African leaders in Washington for the first time.

Mr. Stevens was the Director of the Foreign Service Institute's Public Diplomacy (PD) Training Division from 2017-2019, where he oversaw the training of the State Department's entire public affairs and public diplomacy corps.

He was also the Spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy in Moscow from 2014-2016, where his team's work was recognised in the Public Diplomacy Council's annual "Ten Best" for the "Best Use of Social Media by an Embassy."

He has also served as Chief of Staff at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, chief of public affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Turkmenistan, and in the press and cultural affairs offices at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv.

A native of Great Falls, Virginia and a graduate of Brigham Young University, Mr. Stevens is married with five children. He is an avid football fan, basketball player and bodyboarder.